

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 OPR-02 RSR-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4792

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MBABANE 0744/1

LONDON FOR FOLEY

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, WZ

SUBJECT: KING SOBHUZA REPEALS CONSTITUTION

REFS: A) MBABANE 0732; B) MBABANE 0724

C) MBABANE 0610

1. SUMMARY. IN SURPRISE, DRAMATIC ACTION APRIL 12, KING SOBHUZA II REPEALED CONSTITUTION, DISMISSED PARLIAMENT, AND ASSUMED PERSONAL RULE. KING APPARENTLY REACTING TO PERCEIVED THREATS TO LAW AND ORDER AND FROM INABILITY CONTINUE TOLERATE EXISTENCE OF FORMAL OPPOSITION. KING REPORTEDLY ALSO FEARFUL OF ASSASSINATION. EXTENT OF ACTION SURPRISED WESTERN OBSERVERS WHO PERCEIVE NO SERIOUS THREAT TO LAW AND ORDER. NON- SWAZIS AND EVEN SOME SWAZIS PROFESS BELIEF KING YIELDED TO PRESSURES AND
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OVER- REACTED TO INSIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION. THERE NO RPT NO PUBLIC INDICATION HOW LONG KING INTENDS MAINTAIN PERSONAL RULE OR OF NATURE OF SWAZI- DESIGNED CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT WHICH PROBABLY WILL EVENTUALLY EMERGE. EMBASSY PREDICTS SWAZILAND WILL CONTINUE EFFORTS TOWARD ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DURING PERIOD OF PERSONAL RULE. END SUMMARY.

2 IN DRAMATIC ACTION YESTERDAY, APRIL 12, KING SOBHUZA II, REPEALED SWAZILAND'S CONSTITUTION, DISMISSED PARLIAMENT AND ASSUMED PERSONAL CONTROL OF COUNTRY AS KING- IN- COUNCIL (REF A). KING TOOK ACTION AFTER UNANIMOUS RESOLUTION OF BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT STATING PRESENT CONSTITUTION WAS UNWORKABLE AND APPEALING TO KING TO FIND WAYS AND MEANS TO RESOLVE PRESENT " CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS" WITH MEMBERS PLACING THEMSELVES ENTIRELY AT DISPOSAL OF KING- IN- COUNCIL. AFTER HEARING PRIME MINISTER RECOUNT PARLIAMENTARY RESOLUTION AT ROYAL CASTLE BYRE AT LOBAMBA LATER IN AFTERNOON, AND AFTER PRINCE SIFUBA, HEAD OF SWAZI NATIONAL COUNCIL, ENDORSED RESOLUTION ON PART OF ENTIRE SWAZI NATION, KING TOOK EXTREME MEASURE OF ASSUMING PERSONAL RULE AND ISSUED SERIES OF DECREES GIVING HIM WIDE- RANGING POWERS, INCLUDING THAT OF PREVENTIVE DETENTION. ROYAL PROCLAMATION STATED THAT KING WAS DECREETING PREVENTIVE DETENTION POWERS FOR SIX- MONTH PERIOD, BUT THERE WAS NO RPT NO OTHER MENTION OF TIME FOR WHICH KING PROPOSES HOLD PERSONAL RULE NOR WAS THERE ANY ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLANS FOR DRAWING UP NEW CONSTITUTION OR SUBSTITUTING REVISED PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM.

3. KING SOBHUZA STATED HE HAD TAKEN DRASTIC ACTION TO PREVENT BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER AND TO REVERSE PROCESS OF DISHARMONY, BITTERNESS AND DIVISION WHICH EXISTED IN COUNTRY. PRINCE SIFUBA, ON BEHALF SWAZI NATION, HAD STATED THAT NATION WISHED KING TO KNOW IT HAD NEVER BEEN SO DIVIDED AS AT PRESENT. KING LAID BLAME FOR PRESENT " VERY SERIOUS SITUATION" IN COUNTRY DIRECTLY TO CONSTITUTION WHICH INTRODUCED " UNDESIRABLE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES" INTO COUNTRY BRINGING BITTERNESS AND THREATS TO PEACE, LAW AND ORDER.

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4. MOST INTERESTED OBSERVERS AND NON- POLITICAL SWAZIS

HAD EXPECTED SUSPENSION OF PORTIONS OF CONSTITUTION AND REVISION OF PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM (REF B), BUT ALL WERE SHOCKED BY EXTREMITY OF KING' S DRASTIC MOVES. EXCEPT FOR RECENT GOVERNMENT PREOCCUPATION WITH PROCESSING OF NGWENYA CASE AND SICKNESS OF PRIME MINISTER WHICH COMBINED TO INHIBIT NORMAL BUSINESS, MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE SWAZILAND WELL AND ORDERLY RUN, STABLE, HARMONIOUS AND PEACEFUL COUNTRY. THERE APPEARED BE NO RPT NO REAL THREAT TO LAW AND ORDER. THERE HAVE BEEN NO RPT NO INSTANCES OF SUSTAINED STRIKES, DEMONSTRATIONS OR INDEED SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION TO KING OR GOVERNMENT, EXCEPT FOR MINISCULE AND PEACEFUL OPPOSITION REPRESENTED BY NGWANE NATIONAL LIBERATORY CONGRESS (NNLC). THIS GROUP SUCCESSFUL IN ELECTING 3 OPPOSITION MEMBERS (OUT OF TOTAL OF 30 MEMBERS OF HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY) TO PARLIAMENT IN 1972 ELECTIONS .

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MBABANE 0744/2

5. PERCEPTIONS WESTERN OBSERVES OR EVEN THOSE OF YOUNGER MODERN, EDUCATED SWAI TO EFFECT KING OVER- REACTED

OBVIOUSLY DO NOT MATCH PERCEPTIONS OF KING AND CLOSE TRADITIONAL ADVISERS WHO SAW COUNTRY IN SERIOUS AND DETERIORATING SITUATION. A) THERE HAVE BEEN BRIEF WORK STOPPAGES AT HAVELOCK AND NGWENYA MINES; B) SOME CIVIL SERVANTS WERE DISSATISFIED BY THE 1972 WAGE INCREASES AND REQUESTED A MEETING OF ALL CIVIL SERVANTS IN DECEMBER 1972; C) THE MODERNIZATION AND PROLIFERATION OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IN SWAZILAND HAVE BROUGHT ATTEMPTS TO ORGANIZE UNIONS; D) DEPARTURE TO AND RETURN OF STUDENTS FROM THE ROMA CAMPUS OF UBLS, OTHER INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA AND BEYOND HAVE RESULTED IN INCREASED VOCALIZATION OF COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES; E) NNLC TACTICS HAVE BEEN BASICALLY NEGATIVE, INVOLVING DIRECT CRITICISM OF THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE DLAMINI CLAN IN SWAZILAND. THERE IS ALSO SOME EVIDENCE THAT VERY RECENTLY NNLC MEMBERS WERE INITIATING AND SPREADING RUMORS THAT PROMINENT

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FIGURES, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, WERE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN RITUAL MURDERS; F) THERE HAS BEEN GROWING PRESSURE IN THE RURAL AREAS FOR DIFFERENT RULES FOR LAND TENURE. IMPLYING A DIMINUTION IN THE REAL POWER OF THE LOCAL CHIEF. ALL THESE ACTIVITIES SEEM FAIRLY TAME TO THE MORE WORLDLY RESIDENTS OF SWAZILAND. THEY MAY, HOWEVER, TO TRADITIONAL SWAZIS, ESPECIALLY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, REPRESENT TRENDS AND PORTENTS THAT MUST BE CHECKED. THE IMBOKODVO PARTY, FOR EXAMPLE, BELIEVES IT COULD NOT EVEN RISK A BY- ELECTION TO FILL THE SEAT OF A DECEASED PARLIAMENTARIAN.

6. KING' S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THIS SITUATION A MIXTURE OF CONVICTION, OUTSIDE PRESSURE, AND HAPPENSTANCE. HE HAS CONSISTENTLY ENUNCIATED CONCEPT OF " OPPOSITION" AS ALIEN TO SWAZI TRADITION. THE ORIGINAL ACTION ON THE DEPORTATION OF NGWENYA WAS REPORTEDLY INITIATED WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE OR CONSENT. HOWEVER, THE ACTION IN PARLIAMENT IN ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL CITIZENSHIP TRIBUNAL WAS INITIATED WITH HIS ASSENT. THE SEBSEQUENT APPALS COURT DECISION PROCLAIMING THIS TRIBUNAL ULTRA VIRES INFURIATED HIM. ACCUSATIONS THAT MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY AND CLAN HAD PRACTICED RITUAL MURDER AND CANNIBALISM SHOCKED AND DISGUSTED HIM. IT IS BELIEVED THAT HIS MAJESTY RESISTED JETTISONING THE CONSTITUTION AND THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM COMPLETELY. CABINET MEMBERS AS LATE AS APRIL 12 WERE SOLICITING INFORMATION FROM THE EMBASSY ON THE PROCEDURES FOR AMENDING THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION. THE COMBINATION OF PRESSURES FROM LOCAL CHIEFTAINS AND FEARS ULTIMATELY FOR HIS PERSONAL SECURITY OBVIOUSLY PREVRILED IN THE END.

7 THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT
AT LEAST IN THE MECHANICS OF THE CHANGE. AMONG THE FOLLOWS
OF RUMORS, PERVASIVE ONES INCLUDE THOSE THAT A PRETORIA
ATTORNEY, JAN DE VRIES (PHONETIC), COUNSELED THE KING ON
THIS COURSE, THAT THROUGH DE VRIES EFFORTS A JOHANNESBURG
LAW FIRM WROTE THE EDICTS DELIVERED YESTERDAY AND HAS
ALREADY DRAFTED A NEW CONSTITUTION. FREDERIC COACH,
FORMERLY THE CONTROVERSIAL POLICE COMMISSIONER IN LESOTHO
HAS RECENTLY ARRIVED AS GENERAL MANAGER OF THE LUYT- OWNED
HIGHLAND BREWERY. HE IS RUMORED TO BE THE CHIEF ADVISER
TO THE SWAZILAND ARMY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE MATERIAL
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BENEFITS TO SOUTH AFRICA ARISING FROM THIS NEW SITUATION.
THERE MIGHT WELL BE PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS SHOULD
SWAZILAND TURN BACK THE CLOCK FAR ENOUGH TO AIL IN
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

8. SWAZILAND MANIFESTS AN IMAGE OF EXCEPTIONAL STABILITY
AND PEACE AND RELATIVE EFFICIENCY AND PROGRESS. IT IS
UNLIKELY THAT THE GAINS MADE SINCE INDEPENDENCE WILL NOW
BE LOST. THE EMBASSY FORESEES A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS TO
ONE YEAR OF "PERSONAL RULE." THERE WILL PROBABLY BE
AN INTERIM PRIME MINISTER, EIGHTER MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
HLOPE OR MINISTER OF JUSTICE POLYCARP DLAMINI. DURING
THIS PERIOD, A NEW CONSTITUTION WILL BE FORMULATED AND
PROMULGATED. THIS CONSTITUTION
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LONDON
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